THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) As per the estimates made in May, 2009, growth in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at factor cost declined from 9 percent during the year 2007-08 to 6.7 percent (revised estimate) in 2008-09. The lower growth in GDP in 2008-09 was spread across most sectors of the economy including agriculture. The decline in growth in GDP in 2008-09 could be attributed to many factors including the agricultural production being influenced by the vagaries of monsoon. Despite vicissitudes of weather, total foodgrain production increased from 230.77 million tonnes in 2007-08 to 233.87 million tonnes in 2008-09 as per the 4th advance estimates.

(c) to (e) The Government has plans to achieve 4% growth in agriculture during the current year. In order to achieve the 4% growth rate, the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation has taken several steps to facilitate better performance in the agriculture and allied sectors. These include increase in plan outlays, endeavor to increase in overall investment, launching of new projects and programmes during recent years such as Rashtriya Jkrishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and National Horticulture Mission (NHM). Substantial allocation has been made under these Schemes and there has been satisfactory performance. Some traditionally foodgrain deficit states have begun contributing their surplus production to the Central Procurement Pool.

There has been quantum jump in production of certified/quality seeds of high yielding verities during last few years. 250.35 lakh qtls. of certified/quality seeds were produced and made available in 2008-09 as against 194.31 lakh quintals during 2007-08 and 148.10 lakh qtls. during 2006-07. For Kharif 2009, availability of quality seeds is 126.51 lakh qtls. as against the requirement of 110.97 lakh qtls. Thus, there is a surplus of 15.54 lakh qtls.

During the Eleventh Plan period, an area of 14 lakh ha. under micro irrigation has been targeted to be covered with an outlay of Rs. 3400 crore.

Minimum Support Prices of major cereals were increased substantially in the range of 49% to 78% during the last five years.

The total budgetary for the year 2008-2009 was enhanced by more than 80% compared to the budget estimates of 2007-08. It is further proposed to be increased by 11% to Rs. 11915 crores during 2009-10.

Due to a number of steps taken by the Government and farmers' encouraging response thereto, there has been substantial increase in agriculture production. The average growth rate in the agriculture and allied sector has been more than 4% the last 4 years despite decline in growth rate during 2008-09.

Decline in the production of pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane and coarse cereals

1497. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI N.K. SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether production of wheat and rice this year is higher in comparison to last year;

(b) whether production of pulses, edible oilseeds, sugarcane and coarse cereals have declined this year;

(c) if so, the factors responsible for decline in production of pulses, edible oilseeds, sugarcane and coarse cereals this year;

(d) whether Government has chalked out any strategy to help the farmers who are engaged in production of pulses, edible oilseeds, sugarcane and coarse cereals to boost production; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. As per 3rd Advance Estimates released on 8th May, 2009, production of pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane and coarse cereals in the country during the current year has been lower than their production during last year. The decline in production is due to following factors:-

- Low productivity of oilseeds because of their cultivation under unirrigated i.e rainfed and drought prone areas.
- Use of poor quality seeds and farmers' reluctance to provide cash inputs.
- Susceptibility to pests and diseases.
- Lack of high yielding varieties suitable to the local agro climatic regions.
- Non- availability of hybrids in the major oilseeds like, Groundnut, Sesamum and Soyabean.
- Reduction in area of sugarcane due to shift to more profitable crops like rice and wheat in some States.

(d) and (e) In order to increase the production of pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals in the country, the Government is implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes "Integrated Scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize(ISOPOM)" and "Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Coarse Cereals Based Cropping Systems Areas (ICDP-Coarse Cereals)" subsumed under Macro Management Mode of Agriculture respectively.

To increase production of sugarcane, a scheme on "Sustainable Development of Sugarcane Based Cropping System (SUBCAS)" is under implementation in major sugarcane growing States. The main thrust of the scheme is on the transfer of improved technology to the farmers through field demonstrations, training of farmers, supply of farm implements, enhancing seed production and pest control measures.

The Government is also implementing the National Policy for Farmers, 2007 with an objective to increase the income of farmers by enhancing the economic viability of farming. Many of the

schemes/programmes being implemented by different Ministries/Departments are as per the provisions of National Policy for Farmers, 2007. Besides, the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of major pulses, oilseeds, coarse cereals and sugarcane have also been increased significantly during 2008-09.

Suicide pact by farmers of Palamu district

1498. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:
SHRI N.K. SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that farmers of drought prone Palamu district in Jharkhand have signed a suicide pact;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether the failure of monsoon and burden of debt are the main factors forcing farmers to take a decision to commit suicide;

(d) if so, whether Union Government proposes to take any effective step to help the farmers who are under severe burden of debt; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Government of India is not aware of any such pact. However, when such a report was published in a newspaper, the Government of Jharkhand got the matter enquired into, through the Deputy Commissioner, Palamu. While the people were disturbed due to successive failures of 3 monsoons, there was no such suicide pact despite instigation by an individual.

(d) and (e) In order to address the problem of indebtedness of farmers, a scheme of Debt Waiver and Debt Relief for Farmers has been implemented in all districts of the country. As per provisional figures, a total of 3.01 crores small and marginal farmers and 0,67 crores other farmers have benefited from the scheme involving debt waiver and debt relief of Rs.65,318.33 crores. Under the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008, farmers with more than 2 hectares of land holding, can now pay 75% of their overdues by 31.12.2009 instead of 30.06.2009. Besides this, in the Union Budget 2009-10, there is a proposal to set up a Task Force to look into the issue of loans to taken by the farmers from private money lenders.

Agriculture becoming unremunerative

1499. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:
SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that day by day agriculture is becoming unremunerative and farmers are falling into debt trap;

(b) if so, what has been done by Government to provide better returns for their crops;